PROGRESS TOWARD DISASTER

—Robert Barra

THE

Commonweal

PERSECUTION AND THE POLES

by Gunnar D. Kumlien

OUR LIFE AND TIMES

Palaces of Pleasure

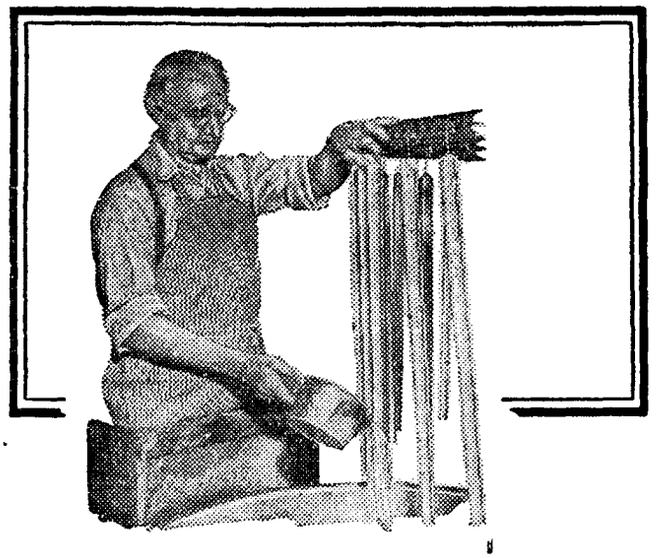
by Gabriel Gersh

Portrait of America?

by Howard Davis Spoerl

Volume LXIII, No. 2 October 14, 1955 Twenty Cer

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



REVERENT in concept and execution...

Like their fathers and grandfathers before them, master chandlers in the Will & Baumer plant practice the art of candle making as in the days of the guilds.

Patiently and painstakingly they dip Will & Baumer beeswax candles by hand. Each artisan is fully grounded in Rubrical requirements . . . each is proudly conscious that the product of his hands is destined for altars throughout the world.

Modern technology, we firmly believe, can never supplant Will & Baumer's devoted craftsmanship—craftmanship that's reverent in concept and execution.

Will & Baumer
CANDLE CO., INC.
The pioneer Church Candle Manufacturers of America
IN OUR SECOND CENTURY OF FINE CANDLE MAKING
Syracuse • Boston • New York • Chicago
Montreal • Los Angeles

TAPERLITE dinner candles help to make the home the social axis for entertaining and cultured enjoyment. Buy Taperlites in the convenient "Two-Pack", at your leading merchants. A Will & Baumer product.

CANDLE CRAFTSMEN FOR OVER A HUNDRED YEARS

THIS WEEK

Week by Week 27

Persecution and the Poles
by Gunnar D. Kumlien 31

Palaces of Pleasure
by Gabriel Gersh 33

Portrait of America?
by Howard Davis Spoerl 35

Progress toward Disaster
by Robert Barrat 37

The Stage
by Richard Hayes 40

The Screen
by Philip T. Hartung 40

Communications 41

Books 44

THE COMMONWEAL
386 FOURTH AVENUE
NEW YORK 16

Editor
EDWARD S. SKILLIN

Managing Editor
JAMES O'GARA

Associate Editor
WILLIAM CLANCY

Assistant Editor
JAMES FINN

Contributing Editors
PHILIP BURNHAM
JOHN C. CORT
ANNE FREMANTLE
PHILIP T. HARTUNG
RICHARD HAYES

JOHN BRUBAKER: *Advertising Manager*

Entered as second-class matter at the post office at Orange, Conn., under the act of March 3, 1879. Published weekly, printed and copyrighted 1955 in the U. S. A. by the Commonweal Publishing Co., Inc., 386 Fourth Ave., New York 16, N. Y., MUrray Hill 3-9685.

U. S. and Canada, $7.50 a year. Foreign, $9.50. Single copies 20¢

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Commonweal

week by week

SENSE OF VALUES

TWO of the articles in this issue of The Commonweal cite certain of the penalties the people of a production-conscious nation like the United States pay for a system that has provided unparalleled material prosperity. These penalties have first to be measured against the accomplishment of delivering many millions from recurring want and fear for their economic future. For once the scourge of war got it rolling, the American high-wage system has displayed a remarkable capacity for maintaining good levels of production and employment. Thus millions of workers with only their skills and their energies to offer stand at last on solid ground.

For certain segments of the population annual income is still far short of the sum required for the decent raising of a family. This is demonstrated most emphatically today in the nation's appalling rural and urban slums. But for the millions who are caught up in the sweep of postwar prosperity, relentless economic pressure is no longer uppermost. Many, however, experience vague feelings of dissatisfaction and a hunger for more substantial things that is seldom fully conscious or articulated. It is a hunger that is not met, say, by the usual run of radio or TV programs and a restlessness that is not assuaged by miles of driving over the best landscaped modern parkways.

The desire for something more substantial, for activities with a more personal meaning, has actually led to a number of interesting developments in the United States in recent years. Doubtless the sense of one's personal helplessness in this pushbutton world has had a lot to do with the phenomenal growth of the "do-it-yourself" idea. The learning of various crafts also comprises a leading sector in the curricula of the many local Adult Education schools opening again this fall in all parts of the nation. Industry may continue to be short of technicians, but there is a big increase in the number of amateur tool-wielders operating principally in and about the American home.

Moreover, various large companies and labor unions are presently catering to a certain desire to participate actively in the arts by organizing little theaters, symphony orchestras and courses in ballet. Lecture series continue to serve as a prominent feature of the American cultural landscape in vocational, community and local church settings. Yet all this exerts a minor influence.

THE latest means of travel and communication are, of course, potentially great sources of cultural enrichment and a personal sense of achievement. Incomes above the subsistence level coupled with vacations with pay allow for the planning of leisure time. Visits to other sections of the country, for example, can supply considerable stimulus.

In some of their more ambitious moments both radio and TV have presented musical, dramatic, educational and other features that indicate what they can provide in the way of more substantial fare. The possibilities are many. The extent to which they are developed will greatly depend on creating a demand—basically on the degree to which interest in such matters can be developed in home and school. As of now, the bulk of radio- and TV-fare has a deadening effect; it is hardly calculated to stimulate man's creative or critical energies.

To what extent does the tail wag the dog in the production arena? The automobile industry serves as a key example. In a single year production and sales have risen nearly forty per cent; the estimate for 1955 is a record seven and a half million cars. Yet a year from now the industry is to have a ten-million-car capacity. The Big Three companies, which now account for nine out of every ten new cars, are said to be determined to use this greatly expanded capacity.

Assuredly, the economic effects would snowball. Employment in the steel, rubber, plastic and other contributing industries would go up another

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

notch. The oil industry would experience another boom. Increased demand and plans for new highways would be inevitable—and so forth.

But how could the auto companies secure the required sales in an already saturated market? The various low-income groups and feasible exports would supply little help. That would leave but the possibility of raising the number of two- and three-car families. This would be quite a task. The major advertising campaign that would necessarily be involved would afford the American home and school a fine chance for intensive counter-action at the individual level—inculcating a critical attitude toward the values underlying the various salesmen's versions of the vaunted American way of life.

CLIMATE OF FEAR

IN the United States all men are equal, but when it comes to race relations, some—to borrow a phrase from Orwell—are more equal than others. If we are honest, we have to face the fact that this is true in most areas of the United States. But in recent months the state of Mississippi has gone to most abominable lengths to give new meaning and substance to this terrible truth.

There are almost one million Negro residents in Mississippi, but the number of Negroes registered to vote in recent elections amounted to slightly more than twenty-two thousand. Since then, the number of Negroes registered has fallen to eight thousand, and for obvious reasons. A Negro minister of Belzoni, Mississippi, for example, refused to take his name off the voter registration list, despite great pressure. Early this year he was shot and killed, and at this writing his murderers still go free. A few months after this killing, a Negro leader of Brookhaven, Mississippi, publicly urged other Negroes to register and vote; he was shot down in broad daylight in front of the local courthouse. In this case three suspects were arrested, but no indictments have been returned against them.

In Mississippi, too, as in other areas of the South, the White Citizens Councils are active. Council members are respectable men, lawyers, bankers, businessmen, and their technique is simple and effective; they do not hold with violence or lynching, but prefer to pressure men into submission with the power of money. Any Negro leader who urges his people to register and vote, or—crime of crimes—who says the Supreme Court was right in ruling against segregation, will find that mortgage money is no longer available for him or that the normal credit he needs in his business is suddenly and mysteriously denied.

There are all these things, and for months the evidence of injustice and crime has been multiplying. But the Till case, on which we have commented before, has focused the eyes of the United States, and of the world, on Mississippi. There an all-white jury acquitted of murder the men who admitted kidnapping the Negro boy. The jury, it is reported, doubted that the body found was actually that of Emmett Till, despite positive identification by his mother; they were more inclined, it is said, to accept the idea that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People had planted a body in the river to "make trouble"! Here it might be noted that outsiders would be more willing to accept, not the fantastic story itself, but the idea that the white people of Mississippi themselves believe it if two things were happening. If the two men are really considered innocent of this murder, the most intense search should be under way for the guilty parties. But there is no indication that the officials concerned are any more interested in such a search than they are in bringing to fair trial the killers of the Negro leaders murdered earlier this year. And if public officials seriously believe, as they claim, that the body found was not that of Emmett Till, one would expect a clamor for a positive identification of the body found and for the discovery of the whereabouts of Emmett Till himself, dead or alive. There are no indications that either course is being followed, and it is hard to believe that any responsible public official really believes the racist rumors of "planted" bodies and perjured identification.

Unless the public officials of Mississippi change course, most people will continue to believe that a Negro boy, a stranger from the North, was foully done to death and his murderers protected with the connivance of white officials. The world knows that the witnesses in the Till case have fled the state for fear of their own safety; the world believes that justice has been mocked in Mississippi under the guise of law-enforcement. It is no wonder that thousands of Negro citizens in New York have been crowding to protest meetings. It is no wonder that civic groups, labor unions, and religious bodies have been calling for Federal intervention to protect U.S. citizens from continued infringement of their constitutional and human rights. What is a wonder is that there has not been more outcry from responsible voices in the South itself.

People in the North know that Negro-white relations are far from perfect. They know that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he fact of race still keeps men from certain neighborhoods, schools, jobs. They know how long is the road to be traveled, and they are usually willing—even too willing—to listen to those in the South who state that more time is needed there, that reform cannot be accomplished overnight. But the Till case makes a mockery of all this. If there is no equal right before the law in a case like this, how is it possible to talk about moderation and slow but steady progress? The world waits for the outraged voices of Southern decency protesting the sin that has been committed against the honor of the South—and of mankind.

THE POLITICAL PROSPECTS

THE nation continues its prayerful concern for President Eisenhower's early recovery. In the meantime, the radical change that his heart attack has made in the domestic political situation is too obvious to be ignored.

A few weeks ago the President warned the Republican party not to gamble its entire future on one man. He spoke movingly of human frailty and mortality, and told the GOP that it must be prepared, if necessary, to seek new leadership. The GOP however, could not take the President's warnings too seriously because 1956 without the leadership of Dwight D. Eisenhower seemed unimaginable.

Now fate has given reality to Mr. Eisenhower's words and the whole political picture has changed. Where all was stability all is now flux. It seems a practical certainty that the President will retire at the end of his first term, and the politicians in both parties must therefore revise their strategy for next year.

Through some political miracle, President Eisenhower has never become popularly identified with his party. He has been beyond politics—"everybody's President"—and, since the GOP is numerically a minority party, this was its great hope for victory next year. Now, however, it is a cause for anguish, because Republicans themselves have argued that without Mr. Eisenhower at the head of the ticket the party's chances in 1956 would be dismal indeed. Most Democrats, on the other hand, had been willing—at least privately—to concede next year's election to the popular General. Now they see themselves returning to the White House in 1956.

All this, of course, may prove baseless speculation. The President conceivably might decide to run again, and even if he does not, his image and influence might still save the Presidency for his party. But these are political imponderables, and politicians must concern themselves with what can be measured and weighed. Their thoughts therefore turn, in this October, to the question of who is the man most likely to defeat the candidate the other party is most likely to nominate. And here certain men—Nixon, Warren, Knowland, Lodge, on the one hand; Stevenson, Harriman, Kefauver, on the other—immediately come to mind.

Something can be said for and against each man. Of the two most frequently mentioned, it is being said that Mr. Nixon is now in a position to prove his level of statesmanship and that Mr. Stevenson, as a once defeated candidate, cannot be counted on to run a strong race. It is also being said that Mr. Nixon, whatever his future conduct, has in the past made himself so obnoxious to most independent voters that his chances of winning the Presidency are forever destroyed, and that Mr. Stevenson would be supported next year by millions who wished they could have voted for him in 1952, but decided reluctantly that it was, indeed, time for a change.

Be that as it may, the only certainty now is that we face an uncertain election year. When Dwight D. Eisenhower was struck down by a coronary thrombosis an element of stability went out of our political life. The hope must be that, amid uncertainty, both parties will remain united on those major policies that have kept America strong in the pursuit of justice and peace during the past ten years.

"SECURITY RISKS"

IF they could be regarded as signs of the times two recent decisions affecting supposed security risks would be encouraging. The first concerns Mr. Wolf Ladejinsky, a land reform expert, who was suspended from his job as agriculture attaché in Japan last January when the Agriculture Department designated him a security risk. Now Mr. Ezra Taft Benson, Secretary of Agriculture, has testified at his own request that the designation was "gratuitous and unnecessary," that other reasons dictated the removal. He added that the security procedures of his department were being reformed as a result of the Ladejinsky case.

The second case is that of Mr. Eugene Landy, who was denied a commission in the U. S. Naval Reserve last August because of his mother's past Communist activities. He received such public attention that his case was reviewed by two Navy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

boards and a special review board, all of which upheld the original decision. Mr. Charles Thomas, Secretary of the Navy, found the special review board "fair and objective," but he has reversed its unfavorable decision because "a common sense evaluation" convinced him that Mr. Landy's relation with his mother was properly filial and not political. He thus established that guilt is not incurred merely by kinship.

Mr. Ladejinsky has been cleared, and Mr. Landy has been commissioned; wrongs are righted and we can rejoice. But we continue to hear of distresses that result from our security measures. Recently, Mr. Thadeusz Kassern, former Polish Consul in New York, attempted suicide because he despaired of delays in immigration procedures. Mr. Kassern had been granted political asylum by the State Department in 1948 after he broke with the Communist regime in Warsaw. The Justice department reported him to be "a man of highest integrity" and he was to be granted citizenship if Congress approved the necessary special bill.

The bill, however, was not introduced and Mr. Kassern was told that his application to readjust his immigration status was rejected. In a last letter to his wife, Mr. Kassern said that he could not undergo "the senseless torture of an immigration procedure" again.

Mr. Kassern is expected to recover, and there is promise of a special bill in the next Congressional session. We hope that the outcome of his case will be as satisfactory as were the two we have mentioned. If it is, the result will have derived, in large part, from the attention brought about by his desperate act.

But most people cannot depend upon the press to air their problems. They are not "important" or dramatic. These people must depend upon the security procedures and their proper application. And it is clear that here we need more of the "common sense" of Mr. Thomas and the forthrightness of Mr. Benson.

FEELING THE DRAFT

FOR some time now the manpower pool from which our draftees are siphoned off has been filling up. During the last year the number of eighteen-year-olds registering each month has exceeded by ninety thousand the number of men actually inducted into the services. This apparently pleasant state of affairs presents embarrassing problems to those who determine Selective Service policy, for military service demands youth and the potential draftees in the pool, all too inconveniently, do age.

To cope with this, a new Selective Service policy is being proposed. Rather than taking those whose draft liability would soon run out, the oldest men, the draft boards would select young men without dependents or permanent jobs that might warrant occupational deferment. Thus, nineteen and twenty-year-olds would be drafted first, still young enough to be useful when placed in the ready reserve.

While the proposal would not affect present deferments or exemptions, it would raise new problems. For it would place in some military limbo those potential draftees who are in their early twenties. Too old to be drafted immediately, too young to be completely exempt, they would be forced to resign themselves to an unsettled condition. The proposal, admirable as is its intention—and possible result—is not completely adequate to the problem.

PAPERBACK COVERS

PAPERBACK books have brought about a minor revolution in American publishing. They have made some of the twentieth century's best, most original, writing available to a mass audience for twenty-five or thirty-five cents. They have also made a good deal of trouble for themselves by carrying lurid covers that completely misrepresent their contents. It is therefore good news that a new trend in paperback book covers is underway.

According to a news story published in the *Wall Street Journal,* this trend is definitely towards covers that "honestly interpret the book." One paperback executive comments: "Until this year my job used to be quite simple. I would slap a lurid scene on the cover of every book no matter what the subject." Now, the *Journal* informs us, "instead of producing a shocker on the cover, artists strive for mood and emotional appeal, often through artistic symbols and other design abstractions."

This sounds fine, and we've noticed some change already. Koestler's *Darkness at Noon,* for example, used to carry a cover suggesting forty nights in a Parisian bordello. Now it appears with a cover suggesting the serious political novel it is. If the trend continues, the paperback publishers may feel less of the censors' breath down their necks and—who knows—they might even sell more books to those many people who for a long time have been disgusted by the sensationalism with which they prostituted both literature and themselves.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Persecution and the Poles

"THE INDIVIDUAL CATHOLIC IS NO LONGER ABLE TO AFFORD THE LUXURY OF STANDING ASIDE AND IGNORING THE GREAT PROBLEMS"

GUNNAR D. KUMLIEN

THE Soviet Union, it is quite obvious, deliberately decided to make Poland an all-Slav fortress in its war against the West. In its efforts to accomplish this, it has turned Poland practically around and pushed it deep into Germany; the Poles who lived in the territories now incorporated by Soviet Russia have been shifted to former German territories from which most Germans have fled. The new border to Eastern Germany, the Oder-Neisse line, is shorter and strategically easier to defend than any border Poland has previously had. Only ten years ago these territories were as German as Texas is American; today, only the half-destroyed, untended cemeteries show that the country was ever German. And the new Polish inhabitants, refugees themselves, do not even know the former names of the towns and streets. Never before has a country been changed so radically and rapidly.

In spite of the fact that both Eastern Germany and Poland are ruled by Communists, they are separated by an iron curtain of barbed wire, watch towers, and, following the border, strange, wide roads which are combed with a special machine every day so that border patrols can detect any footprints on the soft surface. When Polish trains loaded with coal stop at the border before entering Eastern Germany, heavily armed Polish frontier guards walk the coal, thrusting iron bars into it from time to time trying to uncover hidden passengers.

The strange thing about all this, however, is that the Russians, while building this all-Slav, Communist-ruled fortress against the West, have involuntarily constructed a Catholic fortress. The population of Poland was never before almost completely Catholic, as it is now. Before the war millions of Jews lived in Poland, almost like a nation within the nation; during the war almost all were tragically exterminated by the Germans or escaped the country. Now the majority of German Protestants have, in their turn, fled to the West. When they got out, the Germans left behind, next to the cemeteries, their Protestant churches, and, owing to the Russian policy, these deserted churches have been turned over to Catholics. Taken together, these events have wrought a change for which there is no parallel since the religious wars. A whole territory in the heart of Europe which ten years ago was largely Protestant is now almost wholly Catholic, although the Vatican, for obvious reasons, refuses to recognize the change—much to the dismay of the Poles, regardless of their political sympathies.

BEFORE the war the Polish Catholics were not esteemed among Catholics of Western Europe. They were considered primitive and the instruction of their clergy rather modest; in other words, they were often classed with the Catholics of southern Italy or of Spain. When the Communists took over in Poland and the struggle between them and the Church started, the general conclusion was, therefore, that the Catholics could not have been more poorly prepared. It was said that they were armed with spears, bows and arrows against the Communist heavy artillery. Priests, members of the orders, bishops and, finally, Cardinal Wyszynski were arrested. The Church in Poland was literally beheaded and the future could not have looked darker.

Many of these priests belonged to the anti-Communist underground resistance movement, which was so strong that as late as 1947 a Polish Communist general, Walter Karol Swierczewski, was killed in action against them. Without doubt this resistance movement is now choked and choked in blood. At the same time the Church has grown stronger and more vital than it has ever been, so strong that the Communists for almost a year have been giving up ground or even clearly favoring her. At the same time they try to use her in their foreign propaganda to persuade others of their tolerance and broadmindedness.

What has happened? The explanation is rather simple. As has happened before, persecutions have strengthened the Church and have made its spiritual life deeper. Exactly as has happened in other Communist countries, Communism seems to have acted like a gigantic plow, overturning lots of things and destroying

Mr. Kumlien, Rome correspondent for The Commonweal, will arrive in the U.S. later this month for a lecture tour.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inestimable values. Yet simultaneously it seems to have prepared the field for harvest in an extraordinary way. The individual Pole has been compelled to take a position. He is no longer able to afford the luxury of standing aside and ignoring the great problems—life after death, our origin, what is right and what is wrong. Communism has brutally caught him by the collar and imposed its *weltanschauung,* saying: This is truth! He has been compelled either to agree and justify such agreement within himself or to disagree and to justify in the same way his open or secret disagreement. Those who disagree have rallied to their ancient Church, and there they have discovered that they are in the majority, so much so that those who tend to go along with the Communist view have been compelled to give ground.

Vocations to the priesthood have followed a similar pattern. Before the war, it sometimes happened that the sons of poor peasants became priests because it was very hard to get a chance to study otherwise and because in the old Poland a village priest was a very important man. It was then said, with reason, that vocations of this kind were not the best; they contained too many worldly aspects. As things are now, to be a Catholic priest in a Communist country is hardly a satisfactory career in any worldly sense. Indeed, it well may be the most difficult and nervewracking job that exists, and, to make it even more difficult, the priest has to live only on what the already impoverished faithful can give him.

In spite of all this, vocations, which were already numerous before the war, have increased since, and, according to the rectors of seminaries I have talked to, the spirit of the seminarians is like fire. The seminaries themselves have to face great difficulties; one problem they face is the lack of books, in theology particularly, since currency restrictions make it impossible to buy books from the West and to follow what has been published there during the last fifteen years. But in spite of this and even more serious problems, the seminaries have managed to survive.

POLAND'S Catholicism, which was considered by many Catholics of the West as backward, has managed to stand up against Communism like a rock. The active resistance movement against Communism has been crushed, but the passive resistance of the Catholics has been so effective and widespread that the Communists have had to change policy. In Poland, it is not Catholic writers or thinkers or theologians who have met Communism, but the broad mass of the uneducated people guided by a sort of mystic common sense. As a Polish peasant said to me: "We do not demand that our priests be learned, but only that they be holy and show us the way to Heaven."

At the same time the persecutions have undoubtedly compelled Polish Catholics to make strides forward to meet a difficult situation. If they were backward in many respects before the war, it can now be said without any doubt that the young Polish clergy and Catholic intellectuals can be favorably compared with those in any country in the West. Catholic writers like Bernanos, Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh are read more widely in Poland now than they are in Italy, even though, as far as Western literature is concerned, there are great gaps and many delays in Poland because of Communist censorship. On the whole, in spite of the Iron Curtain, Polish Catholics are better informed about the problems of Catholics in the West than Western Catholics are about the situation of Catholics in Poland.

AMONG the Polish Catholics there is a small group which tries to collaborate with the Communist regime, or at least to achieve a *modus vivendi* with it. These advocates of collaboration are encouraged in every respect by the Communists themselves, and they have considerable material means at their disposal. The majority of Catholics regard them as traitors who have sold themselves to the enemy, and there are undoubtedly among them the recognizable types of fellow-travelers or crypto-Communists. (Some of them are allowed to travel abroad as instruments of Communist propaganda.) But between the outright fellow travelers and the majority of Catholics, there are various intermediate attitudes, all of which urge some form of compromise.

The great majority of Polish Catholics still undoubtedly consider the only possible solution for them to be a liberation by the American army. But as the chances for such liberation grow increasingly remote, the majority listens with less repulsion than before to those who are in favor of some form of compromise. The arguments for compromise are therefore important, and may be summed up in the following way.

First of all, a distinction is made between what Communism has actually achieved in the social field and the Communist ideology as such. The social reforms Communism has actually achieved, not in its

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

propaganda, but in reality, are in many respects no more radical than those achieved in many countries in the West, particularly in the Social-Democratic welfare states. The important thing then, according to this thesis, is to distinguish facts from theory.

It is therefore argued that if in most Communist countries the *facts* in the social field are of the same kind as in most other welfare states in the West, and if the Communist regimes, however unpleasant and undemocratic, are the only existing authority in these countries, then the Church must deal with these Communist regimes exactly as she has dealt in the past with unpleasant and undemocratic regimes in other lands. The Church, it is said, must be present, not absent, for those who are absent always lose.

As far as Communist *theory* is concerned the matter is argued quite differently, and the absolute incompatibility between Catholicism and Communism—in its present form—is admitted. But, it is said, though the Church does not change, how do we know that Communism does not change? (It is pointed out that even now Communism is changing rapidly in all fields; indeed, that Communism recently seems to have experienced a worldwide crisis.) If, then, there *is* absolute incompatibility between Catholicism and Communism in its present form, the advocates of compromise ask, is it at all certain that there will be the same incompatibility in ten or twenty years time, when Communism may have been watered down to the point of our Social-Democracy?

So runs the argument of the compromise thesis. But the most startling thing of all is to hear the Communists themselves explain their change of attitude towards the Church in Poland. There is no change, they say, in their fundamental attitude towards religion as such. They still believe that all religions are merely myths believed in by backward people, and that these myths will vanish when the people are freed from ignorance. If one then reminds them of the religious mass-manifestations in Poland, in Czestochowa and elsewhere, with their clear anti-Communist trend, they reply that the Polish people are still very backward. And if one asks them why Communism not only tolerates such increasing backwardness—"the opium of the people"—but even encourages it, they reply that the backwardness in Poland is so great that it is necessary to proceed slowly, and that it may take centuries before it can be effectively dealt with. This reply, of course, is the confession of Communism's present defeat by Poland's faith.

OUR LIFE AND TIMES I

Palaces of Pleasure

GABRIEL GERSH

AMONG my personal treasures I have a few paragraphs from an English magazine which were written to describe the pleasure resort of the future. The entrepreneur's dream of tomorrow is described in some detail:

"His blueprints pictured a space covering several acres, under a series of sliding roofs—for the British weather is unreliable—and with a central space spread over with an immense dance floor made of translucent plastic which can be illuminated from beneath. Around it are grouped other functional spaces, at different levels. Balcony bars and restaurants commanding high views of the city roofs, and ground-level replicas. A battery of skittle alleys. Two blue lagoons: one, periodically agitated by waves, for strong swimmers, and another, a smooth and summery pool, for playtime bathers. Sunlight lamps over the pools to simulate high summer on days when the roofs don't slide back to disclose a hot sun in a cloudless sky. Rows of bunks on which people wearing sun-glasses and slips can lie and start a tan or deepen an existing one under a sunray lamp."

"Music seeping through hundreds of grills connected with a central distributing stage, where dance or symphonic orchestras play or the radio programme can be caught, amplified, and disseminated. Outside, two one thousand-car parks. One, free. The other, an open-air cinema drive-in, cars queueing to move through turnstiles, and the film thrown on a giant screen facing a row of assembled cars. Uniformed male attendants check the cars, provide free air and water, sell petrol and oil. Girls in white slacks take orders for buffet dishes and drinks, and bring them on trays."

Reading about this vision, the expressions, "pleasure spot," "pleasure resort," "pleasure city," reminded me of the opening of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan

Mr. Gersh, a New York newspaperman, has worked both in the U.S. and abroad.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

It will be seen immediately that Coleridge got it all wrong. He strikes a false note right from the first with that talk about "sacred" rivers and "measureless" caverns. In the hands of the modern entrepreneur, Kubla Khan's project would have become something quite different. The caverns—air-conditioned, of course, and discreetly lighted, with their original rocky interior buried under layers of tastefully-colored plastics—would be turned into a series of tea-grottos in the Moorish, Caucasian or Hawaiian styles. Alph, the sacred river, would be dammed up to make an artificially-warmed bathing pool, while the sunless sea would be illuminated from below with pink electric lights, over which one would cruise in real Venetian gondolas each equipped with radio and TV. The forests and "spots of greenery" referred to by Coleridge would have to go; they would be cleaned up to make way for glass-covered tennis courts, a bandstand, a roller-skating rink and perhaps a nine-hole golf course. In short, there would be everything that a "life-hungry" modern man could desire.

ALL over the world, I have no doubt, hundreds of pleasure resorts similar to the one described above are now being planned, and perhaps are even being built, for this seems faithfully to represent modern man's idea of pleasure. Something of the kind is already partially attained in the more magnificent dance halls, movie theatres, hotels, and restaurants. On a pleasure cruise, for instance, one already gets more than a glimpse of this future paradise. Analyzed, its main characteristics are these: (a) One is never alone. (b) One never does anything for oneself. (c) One is never within sight of wild vegetation or natural objects of any kind. (d) One is never out of the sound of music.

The music—and if possible it should be the same kind of music for everybody—is perhaps the most important ingredient. Its function is to prevent thought and conversation, and to shut out any natural sound, such as the song of birds or the whistling of the wind, that might otherwise intrude. This is not accidental, but is done with a definite purpose, for

The lights must never go out,
The music must always play,
Lest we should see where we are,
Lost in a haunted wood,
Children afraid of the dark
Who have never been happy or good.

It often seems that the aim in the typical modern pleasure resort, consciously or unconsciously, is a return to the womb. For there, too, one was never alone, one never saw daylight, the temperature was always regulated, one did not have to worry about work or food, one's thoughts, if any, were drowned by a continuous rhythmic throbbing.

COLERIDGE'S conception of a "pleasure dome" was obviously very different. It revolved partly around gardens, partly around caverns, rivers, forests and mountains with "deep chasms"—in short, around what is called Nature. The whole notion of admiring Nature, however, and of feeling a sort of religious awe in the presence of glaciers, deserts or waterfalls, is bound up with the sense of man's littleness and weakness against the power of the universe. The moon is beautiful because we cannot reach it, the sea is impressive because one can never be sure of crossing it safely. Even the pleasure one takes in a flower is dependent partly on the sense of mystery.

But modern man's power over Nature is steadily increasing. With the aid of the atomic bomb we can literally move mountains: we could even, so it is said, alter the climate of the earth by melting the polar ice-caps and irrigating the Sahara. Is there not, therefore, something sentimental and obscurantist in preferring a bird-song to swing music and in wanting to leave a few patches of wildness here and there instead of covering the whole surface of the earth with a network of *Autobahnen* flooded by artificial sunlight?

The question only arises because in exploring the physical universe man is lessening his attempts to explore himself. As a result, much of what goes by the name of pleasure is simply an effort to destroy consciousness. If one started by asking, What is man? What are his needs? How can he best express himself? one would discover that merely having the power to avoid work and live one's life from birth to death in electric light and to the tune of canned music is not a reason for doing so.

Man needs warmth, society, leisure, comfort, security and faith: he also needs solitude, creative work and the sense of wonder. If he recognized this he could use the products of science and industrialism eclectically, applying always the same test: does this make me more human or less human? He would then learn that the highest happiness does not lie in relaxing, resting, playing poker, drinking and making love all under one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

roof, if possible, and to the accompaniment of innocuous music. Then the instinctive horror which all sensitive people feel at the progressive mechanization of life would be seen not to be a mere sentimental archaism, but to be fully justified. For man needs to preserve large patches of simplicity in his life, and the tendency of many modern inventions—in particular the film, television, the radio and the airplane—is to weaken his consciousness, dull his curiosity, and, in general, drive him nearer to the animals.

OUR LIFE AND TIMES II

Portrait of America?

HOWARD DAVIS SPOERL

IN a recent issue of the *New York Times Book Review* the French Dominican Father R. L. Bruckberger wrote that during the past twenty years: "the great American novels have become best sellers in France, read as much as and sometimes more than French novels. Alas, what has happened is that those novels have only confirmed the shabby conception that the French already have of America." Making it clear that he did not object to the production of the novels to which he referred, Father Bruckberger proclaimed a need for "other novels and other novelists" in France and also in the United States to "counterbalance" the influence of writers said to misrepresent our country. The need is the more urgent, he said, because "novelists in France have an unequaled power over opinion."

This fact in itself would seem to explain in part why Father Bruckberger is demanding the impossible at the present time. For, "Poe and Melville do not have the same avid following in America as Balzac and Stendhal do in France. We should rather need to compare Balzac and Stendhal with the New York Yankees or the Brooklyn Dodgers" as far as American youth is concerned. Although American novelists may have power over opinion in France they do not characteristically influence opinion here. They know that television is far more decisive. If they had such influence, basic *changes* in opinion might occasionally be expected, resulting in some correction of the lopsidedness which Father Bruckberger claims they represent. So American as well as French novelists continue to confirm French readers in the belief that ours is a barbarous nation "without elegance, or music, or romance," as Stendhal put it, and offering neither enjoyment nor virtue. One root of this belief is the traditional French disposition to take novels seriously. If novelists continue to produce a "lopsided" portrayal it will continue to be accepted in France as an accurate picture of life in the United States.

HOW lopsided *is* the portrayal, which for the literate Frenchman pictures the United States as a "land of selfishness" and barbarity to which has been "added terror and a kind of consecrated horror" through the development of American militarism? Father Bruckberger calls it a caricature, asserting that "America is not simply a blind financial and military power, as she is represented. If her leadership is not to fail, it must be founded on the higher values that she possesses in profusion."

That higher values are present in profusion is not to be denied. That Americans *live* by them is more than extremely questionable. Their unhappy neglect is nowhere more evident than in the aesthetic and religious disciplines with which novelists are decidedly concerned. There is no need to attempt to claim, at the other extreme, that Americans are systematically devoted to a materialism consciously hostile to higher values. Because he is aware of this fact, Father Bruckberger seems to confuse the issue concerning our "materialism."

He asserts, correctly enough, that no country has a monopoly on men who "passionately love money for its own sake," and goes on to point out that "the Frenchman is infinitely more avaricious" than the American. Loving money for its own sake, however, does not seem to be the issue. The phrase properly describes *avarice*, and avarice is not a strong American trait, however many Frenchmen may manifest it. But our comparable American trait is far worse because it is more generally demoralizing. It is the attitude that, without loving money for its own sake, much money should be accumulated because *anything can be bought.* An avaricious person is readily known for what he is and the inherent spiritual problem is finally his to

Mr. Spoerl is chairman of the Department of Philosophy at American International College, Springfield, Mass.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wrestle with. A person can also be intensely avaricious and at the same time discriminate a range of values including many higher values. Too many Americans, however, regarding *all* values more or less as trimmings not essential to their practical preoccupations, make all values *equivalent,* so to speak.

Under the American way, if you are wealthy and your wife is interested in painting you can buy her a gallery of ready-made paintings, or buy her off with diamonds or a trip around the world. If the projected course of a super-highway threatens the site of a church, buy the congregation a "bigger and better" church somewhere else, but keep hands off the highway. If embarrassed by poor people, give them a big handout but never bother to understand their poverty. If workers (now recognized as customers) strike for higher wages, pay the increase and add it to the price, regardless of inflation or the customers who are not workers.

Profits are sacred, although the profit makers cannot tell you why. This kind of materialism, which looks superficially like true avarice but contains a fair amount of quantitative generosity, must indeed be baffling to those of other cultures. In a way it supports "higher values" without a particle of discrimination. As the Yankee proverb has it, "the wheel that squeaks the loudest gets the grease." The entire pattern is faithfully represented (often by default) by writers of fiction.

Stendhal complained that the United States lacked "elegance," which Father Bruckberger concedes but attempts to shrug off as a minor matter. To a Frenchman of Stendhal's time this fact would have been basic, just as the luncheon break of modern French businessmen is often basic. The value at stake in both instances may be somewhat worldly in comparison with other values in a scale, but it is not something superficial that can be bought off with an alleged substitute. An "avaricious" Frenchman, loving money for its own sake, will nevertheless spend it on things close to his heart; an avaricious American, having no values in that sense, is merely a hoarder and a miser.

The general situation being what it is here, with a business "culture" overrunning everything else (like the sacrosanct super-highway) whether by bulldozer tactics or the "buying off" method, may or may not be the unrelieved barbarism it looks like to a contemplative person, but in any case it offers little for the literary artist to utilize as workable material for novels. J. Donald Adams has often complained that American novelists do not adequately present the American business story, which, as he says, dominates American life. When exposés, more or less exaggerated, of the "hucksters" and other business elements appear, the cry of "lopsidedness" goes up. But in human and artistic terms, is there any other side to it?

Where there is a human fulcrum, novelists find an angle for creative portrayal. But there can be no human heroism or progress of nobility where there is no discrimination of values and where executives, politicians, and military officers all give the impression of being caught up in a juggernaut advance which they cannot explain even to themselves. Thus the novelists, except the debunkers, give up and return to spiritually productive themes like adultery. Many of them have integrated the American business situation with other and principal themes, not always unsympathetically. Marquand's hero always goes along with the system in the end. But in plain truth the system as such is simply not worth writing home about from an artistic or creative point of view, and it is certainly not worth writing novels about. The fact that the bulk of the population lives with and in the system in one sense or another is mostly a sad commentary on how a people can be corrupted without even having any particular corrupting villain in the piece.

Executives do not necessarily *want* things the way they are; many of them feel that there is no choice in the matter. One suspects that this feeling is caused mainly by their inability to discriminate among values. Their forebears among the oldtime industrial pirates were not thus backward. They had the values of the Goths and Vandals, but they knew what they wanted. Today it seems to be a question of what the "economic factors in the (strictly impersonal) formula (for which no one is responsible) demand."

American novelists can't write about something that isn't accessible here. There is indeed "another side" to the United States besides that occasionally caricatured by our own and by foreign writers. But its mechanical amorphousness makes it hopeless material for any kind of art. Attempting to get a fix on it is like trying to pick a particular eel out of a barrelful. For the United States is not lacking in traditional and other kinds of artistic culture. But as in the case of the "higher values" in general, we *have* our music, museums, literature, etc. without *cherishing* them from any valuational conviction.

If a Frenchman prolongs a meal while an ulcer-circuit American gobbles a sandwich in a chain drugstore, it does not imply that the former is a glutton, nor even that his primary concern on the occasion is with food as such. It implies the existence of a value system which finds expression in his luncheon ritual. The protection of any value, on any level however commonplace, preserves other values in the scheme. The disregarding of any value tends to debase all values.

This example was chosen in the knowledge that American readers will probably snort over it. All the snorting is familiar. The Frenchman is "unenterprising," "unadaptable," "distracted by non-essentials," etc. But in a very real sense, however rudimentary it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

may be, he has a personal soul to call his own. Americans have "adapted" and readapted their souls to the nondescript vanishing point of "soullessness"—which is precisely what literary artists have been duly reporting for several generations, on both sides of the Atlantic.

THE American soul, potentially great, is formless—as formless as a business day in New York. (Routinization is no criterion of "form".) Americans by and large are *not* civilized and never were, nor will they be as long as they allow incipient civilized values to be overruled by the impulse to "get things done" at all costs. The very amorphousness—the absence of cherished schemes of values—presents the advantage of a companion absence of systematized vices. And here and there, as to all generalizations, there are promising exceptions. The stratified, conservative French system seems to have been planned with a kind of malice aforethought which is connected with its stability. But the American way was never planned at all. Consequently there is nothing in it to write about apart from satire, caricature, and debunking. Since Thoreau died, how many value-cherishing *individuals* has our nation of individual*ists* produced? Abraham Lincoln, for one—and a few hundred prominent radicals.

Father Bruckberger says very truly that "the mission of a true literature has always been to create and sustain a great quarrel within the national conscience." Our novelists have always done their part in this direction. But there has rarely been a sufficiently organized "national conscience" to maintain much of a quarrel. It must have seemed to them like tackling a mound of whipped cream with boxing gloves. For we *have* literature—along with higher values—and if it is not upsetting to anyone it is a cultural ornament; if it is, it is foreign propaganda. In either case it doesn't sink into Americans the way the Brooklyn Dodgers and household gadgets do—despite the large number of Americans who seem to "read" books. It sinks in with the French, who are most benightedly bereft of Brooklyn Dodgers or even, it is whispered, American sportsmanship.

French testimony indicates that our literature is far from insignificant. It portrays whatever it can portray, but it cannot creatively represent the inhuman mechanization of everything or that usually amiable mound of whipped cream. We shall have a greater literature, covering many more aspects of our national life, when we radically humanize and civilize our culture, and not before then. As for Father Bruckberger's assertion that "America is not simply a blind financial and military power," I am inclined to think that he is right. But without a literature and a clear value-discrimination to the contrary, how can this ever be proved?

FROM FRANCE

Progress Toward Disaster

THE Moroccan crisis has long been smoldering. Nearly twenty years ago the Nationalists demanded that France modify the protectorate statute of 1912 and grant sovereignty to Morocco in progressive stages. Since the Liberation in 1945 the governments of France, despite the lessons of Madagascar and Indochina, have put off meeting the aspirations of the Moroccan élite. Occasionally a liberal Resident-General sought to begin a reform program in North Africa, only to be repudiated immediately by the European residents, who were determined to defend their privileges.

But more often tough generals were sent to Rabat on the pretext that "the Moslems understand only the language of force." These generals, who interned, deported and condemned, merely strengthened the national resistance of the people. In 1953 our colonialists thought they had solved the problem by dethroning Sultan Mohammed Ben Youssef. But two years later the situation which led to his dismissal had become truly catastrophic: terrorism and enforced curfew in the cities, economic boycotts, burning of the crops, almost total paralysis of commerce, and insecurity generally.

This situation could not continue. Then a tragic incident impelled President Edgar Faure to act. Jacques Lemaigre-Dubreuil, administrative director of the important Lesieur oil refineries, was assassinated. Convinced that discussion with the Moroccan nationalists must continue, Lemaigre-Dubreuil had bought, last March, a majority of the stock in the newspaper, *Maroc-Presse*. He wanted to make it an instrument for influencing the opinion of the French residents in Morocco. He was struck down in May, presumably by a gang of counter-terrorist police; the authorities are still looking for his assassins.

President Faure, who had met M. Lemaigre-Dubreuil just before he was killed, was greatly upset. He had Francis Lacoste, a weak-kneed bureaucrat, recalled. The Council of Ministers accepted the nomination of M. Gilbert Grandval, former High Commissioner of the Saar, an energetic and determined person who left for Morocco July 5. Six weeks later he resigned. Since August 20 the negotiations with the nationalists on the question of the throne have dragged on, and the confidence and hope which M. Grandval brought to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Morocco have given way to renewed deception and despair. It is clear that the compromise once accepted by the Moroccan leaders will no longer quiet the popular clamor for the return of Ben Youssef to the throne.

What has failed since the first days of August when all observers believed that a solution was in sight and that M. Grandval would carry the day? Ultimately, more than any individual leader it is the French political system that stands accused here. For the government is the geometric point where opposing political tendencies cancel each other. In a parliament as divided as ours, only coalition governments are possible.

In matters concerning North Africa and Indochina as well, each government is, in varying degrees, out of touch with the demands of the actual conditions. Hence the North African situation continues to deteriorate and it appears impossible to reverse the process before the 1956 elections.

HERE is how France, during the month of August, lost several Moroccan trump cards that she will never recover. When Gilbert Grandval left Paris at the beginning of July he was armed with instructions from Edgar Faure and from M. July, Minister of Moroccan and Tunisian Affairs. He was to prepare the departure of Ben Arafa, organize a regency council and clear the way for the return from Madagascar of the deposed Sultan Ben Youssef.

M. Grandval spent his first three weeks in studying the situation and in consultations. He found the universal unpopularity of Ben Arafa to be a fact, and that Ben Youssef had become a national hero. At the end of July he sent to Paris a report in which he underlined the necessity of sending the puppet-sultan Arafa on "vacation," and of setting up in his place a regency council and a representative Moroccan government. He insisted that speed was of the essence and proposed a date: August 18. From all sides he had been informed that demonstrations and uprisings were inevitable on August 20 if spectacular decisions were not made or, at least, promised.

In Morocco the situation was clear. The demonstrations of July 21 at Marrakech destroyed for good the myth of the Glaoui, "the pasha who is all powerful in his own city." On August 11 four Arab chieftains, in the heart of the Berber country, even wired the President of the Republic to demand the return of Ben Youssef. From the European sector the opposition to M. Grandval was marking time. The courage which he had shown at the cathedral at Casablanca during the fearful manifestations which followed the obsequies of the victims of the July 14 disorders had turned the opinion of many Europeans in his favor. He had dared to dismiss ten directors of the Protectorate, who had long been ensconced in their offices like rats in a cheese. He had not been afraid to arrest police officers who were thought to be responsible for counter-terrorist violence or to deport several French and foreign agitators.

But reactions began to appear among the Rightists during the last days of the session of the French Parliament. The contents of the Faure-Grandval plan had been revealed and they aroused intense emotions. The Moroccan lobby was deeply agitated; it comprises such businessmen as M. Boussac, breeder of race horses and director of the reactionary paper, *l'Aurore*, and such deputies as Bidault, de Benouville, P. E. Flandin, and Montel, who are devoted to such businessmen. And it aroused the military, who were fearful of any threats to French "prestige."

At the center of this spider web—though behind the scenes—was Marshal Juin, reputed author of the plot of August 1953. By his spectacular withdrawal from the Committee for North Africa he announced to the French public his disapproval of the evolutionary Faure-July-Grandval policy. An article of his in a conservative review set off the mechanism of a delayed-action bomb. He was to go on vacation. His friends were going to work for him. The latter sent to Paris the two letters of the pasha, Glaoui, and puppet-sultan Arafa in which these men signified that they were opposed to the compromise which they had originally accepted. Terminated at Rabat for all practical purposes, the struggle was therefore shifted to Paris on the political and ministerial terrain.

FOR two dramatic days—the 12th and 13th of August, during the meeting of the Committee for North Africa—Gilbert Grandval pleaded again and again with his auditors. He described to them the psychological state of the Moslem populations, uttered such striking phrases as "Time means blood," threatened to resign. But the Rightist ministers, General Koenig, M. Pinay, M. Triboulet, M. Duchet, opposed the Grandval plan because it involved the return of Ben Youssef. They were opposed to the date of August 18 because France should not give the impression of yielding to a nationalist "ultimatum." They wanted to set longer time limits for the proposed reform measures and to give Arafa one more chance to form a government.

M. Faure yielded on these various points in the hope of saving his plan. He even agreed to take away from the Resident General the direction of the negotiations with the Moroccan leaders and to give it to a council of five which was to meet at Aix les Bains, where M. Pinay takes his annual cure. At the end of these two days Grandval had virtually resigned, for his authority as Resident was undermined and he was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

practically certain there would be an outbreak in Morocco, since no spectacular move was to be announced. M. Faure succeeded in delaying his resignation by explaining to the Resident that he was in basic agreement with him and that the Grandval policy would ultimately be applied, if at a much slower pace. He even got the nationalists to agree in principle to the consultations at Aix by promising to send them as a delegation to the Sultan in Madagascar as soon as possible. And he suggested a date: August 24.

These subtle maneuvers, these conflicting promises, unhappily did not stand up against the pressures of the facts. The bloody incidents at Oued-Zem, Khenifra and Khouribga on August 20 and 21 confirmed M. Grandval's fears: in present Morocco time means blood. But that did not dishearten his adversaries. They accused him of having been the cause of the popular uprising because he had aroused too much hope among the Moroccans. It cannot be denied that Grandval was the first popular Resident since Marshal Lyautey. But to accuse him of having aroused baseless hopes among the Moroccans is a criminal calumny.

I was in Morocco from the 10th to the 30th of August, and I can attest to the fact that, on the contrary, the presence of Grandval, with his extraordinary prestige among the Moroccans, powerfully contributed to the avoidance of more terrible outbreaks, especially in the large cities. And yet General Koenig and M. Pinay demanded his head. Edgar Faure yielded once more; he accepted the resignation of M. Grandval. "We shall continue the policies of Grandval without Grandval," he said to his colleagues.

THE misfortune is, however, that ultimately policies are incarnated in men. Once M. Grandval was gone the Moroccans no longer had confidence. They saw that for six weeks, with the best will in the world, M. Faure had been unable to overcome the resistance of his moderate Ministers. These ministers had pretended to yield on the return of Ben Youssef to France, and the departure of Arafa, only the better to entrench themselves and delay the execution of that plan. Difficulties over the make-up of the regency council were sure to be followed by obstacles to the formation of a Moroccan government. These men had exacted the resignation of Grandval so that they could put in his place a man who was more amenable to the advice of Marshal Juin.

General Boyer de Latour, the new Resident General, who carried out quite loyally the policy of Mendès-France in Tunisia, has never concealed his hostility to the Grandval plan. He is opposed to the presence of the nationalists of the Istiqlal Party in the Moroccan government. Formerly an officer of Native Affairs, he doubtless believes that Morocco can still be administered as it was thirty years ago. How then will he be able to resist the formidable pressure which will be exercised upon him by the French civilians and soldiers in Morocco?

Would he be willing to adopt the plan, even if he should find in his administration the necessary instruments for a policy of collaboration with Moroccan nationalism? How is it possible for men who for five years have been accustomed to viewing the nationalists as "the enemy of France," to admit gaily that yesterday's prisoner will become the tribal chieftain, the pasha or the minister of tomorrow? That is asking too much of human nature. M. Grandval might somehow have been able to pull it off. But M. Grandval has been let go by the French Government. Therefore, in the eyes of the military and of local government employees the Grandval policy is a bad one.

These are the difficulties of the Europeans. But the difficulties on the Moroccan side are just as great. It is extremely difficult outside of Morocco to imagine the extent and intensity of the unrest in the native quarters in such large cities as Fez, Marrakech, Ouida, Rabat and Casablanca. Their populations have not risen thus far, partly because of the deployment of troops guaranteeing order, but also because for the last three months the responsible nationalist leaders have multiplied their appeals for calm. Tirelessly they have been seeking to induce understanding of what is behind the Parisian imbroglio, the reasons for the consultations at Aix and the delays at Paris.

If tomorrow the Nationalist leaders were to return to Morocco saying: "We have been duped: nothing can now be expected from the French Government," there would be a danger of terrible disillusionment on the part of the people. For the masses will think: "Two years of uprisings, terrorism, strikes and boycotts have not been enough to convince Paris that the Moroccans desire the return of Ben Youssef and independence. We must therefore resort to even greater violence." But the Moroccan people are no longer afraid: that is the impressive psychological transformation that I have witnessed during the past two years.

ROBERT BARRAT.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE STAGE

THE BOSTONIANS

I SHALL not linger over the production of "Othello" which the Brattle Theatre of Cambridge lately mounted at the City Center: this was an occasion which offered, one might say at best, very little to the imagination. And since it is supremely the imagination which feeds on the smoky, claustral horrors of this most absolute of Shakespeare's dark poems, it is permissible to question the wisdom of players attempting, on such obviously insufficient resources of personality, to reproduce the tragic experience. We may make, in dramatic literature, the admirable division Mr. Virgil Thomson has underscored in the musical repertoire—a distinction, that is, between the musical (or dramatic) writing of objective evocation, and that of passionate and personal expressivity. The first, Mr. Thomson observes, which forms the substance of the repertoire, can be written or executed by objective methods, provided one has an active imagination. "Taste, intelligence and temperament are the only requirements. These will enable you to get into any role and out of it again, to communicate through it." Music of personal lyricism, on the contrary, cannot be rendered convincingly without personal involvement. Here the structure of emotion, "sentiments, feelings, private patterns of anxiety and relief are not subject to standardization. They must be spontaneous to have any existence at all, spontaneous and unique." "Othello" is, I would submit, a work in this second category, and it was precisely the absence of spontaneity and involvement of the personal impulse that made its production by the Brattle Group so fruitless and impoverished an experience: there is an infinite melancholy about passion which consistently does not—cannot, perhaps—rise to the moral and dramatic occasion.

Shakespeare's "Henry IV, Part I," with which the Bostonians rounded out their engagement, stands in contrast to the darkly private "Othello" as a sterling illustration of the drama of objective evocation. In the ideal company of its predecessor "Richard II" and its sequels, "Henry IV, Part II" and "Henry V," it builds spaciously—in grand blocks of movement and meaning—into a ceremonial exaltation of the principle of kingship, a celebration of the traditional order and hierarchy of society. Richly wrought, dense with life, there is about it an ampleness and pungency—an immense wealth of the *natural*—checked by a most subtle and discriminating moral sensibility, which the later plays, in all their splendid flux of tragic passion, cannot shadow.

The Brattle production broke almost evenly along lines of class. The regal structure of the play—its contentious noblemen, its conspiracies, wars and rumors of wars—was exposed indifferently to our attention; an untutored spectator might indeed have wondered just what was the point of dispute between Bolingbroke and Hotspur. This failure to mark various political emphases and pressures is inexcusable, particularly in a chronicle forming part of what Mr. Eric Bentley has called "the most original and penetrating piece of politics in our literature." Yet the low and bawdy humors which are the other side of the coin were realized by the director, Mr. Jerome Kilty, with nicety and wit. Mr. Kilty's reading of Falstaff—not 'definitive,' I suppose, nor even 'memorable'—was yet at once delicately put together and opulent with detail, running with the juice and flavor of unrepentant mortality. If it lacked boldness of conception, it had fineness of finish: the plummy language was delivered with unfailing authority, the grotesque movement (humorous rather than comic) controlled by taste and decorum. Nothing was patronized in the performance and nothing guyed; it was an illustration of how the tarnished may be redeemed from cliché by abstinence and tact.

Mr. Kilty found for his production a unified and vigorous style: the permanent set was exploited ingeniously; the costumes were discreet, the music princely and distinguished. A clever use of silhouette at least partially refurbished the battle sequences. And two passages—Falstaff's evasion of the sheriff, and the Welsh Lady Mortimer's leavetaking of her husband—achieved beauty as well as competence. In them, the exquisite Shakespearean rhythm was suddenly felt, the shape of the scene beautifully exposed and communicated. For those two moments, and for Mr. Kilty's Falstaff, the journey from Boston to New York was surely not in vain.

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

NO COLOR LINE

FROM almost the beginning of "Seven Cities of Gold," when Father Junípero Serra berates the Spanish soldiers for making slaves of the Mexicans, you realize you are seeing no ordinary historical movie. As spiritual director of this 1769 expedition into California and charged with founding missions, the priest daringly reminds the rough soldiers that they are children of God and it is not they who will decide the color of men who get into Heaven. This scene, showing the reaction of the men toward the priest's plea for justice to the California Indians—and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the officers who realize they are going to have no easy time with Father Serra—sets the tone of the film and is the first of many effective episodes that make this movie so unusual. The script by Richard L. Breen and John C. Higgins (stemming from a novel by Isabelle Gibson Ziegler) makes no attempt to follow Serra up the California coast to all nine of his missions, but stops after the founding of the first at San Diego, and after suggesting the many problems involved in converting and educating the Indians.

Pictorially "Seven Cities of Gold" is a thing of beauty; CinemaScope and De Luxe Color have been used well in photographing the rugged Mexican country and coast line that represents old California, and the wide screen is especially effective in the distant shots of Indian villages or Spanish soldiers on the march. But Producers Robert D. Webb (who also directed) and Barbara McLean were particularly successful in conveying the joy that Junípero Serra took in his work. Without indulging in the poetic ecstasy of Rossellini's "Flowers of St. Francis," the American film has caught the happy spirit that surrounded Serra, who promised one day to start a mission in honor of the founder of his order. No doubt much of the genuine goodness that permeates this role of the priest in the film is due to Michael Rennie's splendid performance. And Director Webb has wisely restrained the other leading roles: Anthony Quinn as Captain Portola, the leader of the expedition who has respect for Serra but reminds him that military decisions are not based on mission bells; Richard Egan as the proud lieutenant left in charge of San Diego when Portola advances north, a man more interested in gold than in religion but on whom some of Serra's goodness brushes off; and Jeffrey Hunter as the young Indian chief who becomes interested in the white man's God —until the tragic death of his sister, an accident for which he holds Egan responsible. Although most of the soldiers in "Seven Cities" behave with more decorum than the Spanish actually exhibited when they went into California, the film is to be commended for its calm tone of restraint and understatement throughout.

GOING from the sublime to the ridiculous, there's a pleasant surprise in a new adult movie about a dog. Starting out with Richard Harding Davis' short story and pepping it up with some Runyonesque dialogue, scriptwriter John Michael Hayes allows Wildfire, a pit bull terrier, to tell his own tale; and because Wildfire's wisecracks are so droll, "The Bar Sinister" turns out to be a much funnier film than its sometimes-sad-sometimes-sentimental plot would indicate. As Wildfire relates the main events in his life, from the time he set out to kill his father for deserting his mother, and then was "adopted" by a Bowery bum (Jeff Richards) who taught him how to fight other dogs in a betting saloon, and then was cared for by a nice old dog-trainer (Edmund Gwenn) on an elegant Long Island estate where he finally landed in fancy dog shows, Director Herman Hoffman handles the people who surround our hero with a quick-paced light touch. I wish Producer Henry Berman, who decorated this turn-of-the-century story with handsome Eastman Color photography in CinemaScope, had toned down some of the scenes for the kiddie audience, not to the "Lassie" level necessarily, but just so parents could take their children and everyone could have a good time.

MOVIEGOERS whose respect for Shakespeare is not so great that they object to having his lines tampered with may enjoy Orson Welles' "Othello." Producer-director-actor Welles wanted the story of the ill-fated Moor done his way, so the movie is beautifully photographed in black and white with lovely shots of Venice—and the whole piece is dominated by architecture and Welles. Actually the result is interesting; certainly Welles, as the general driven by jealousy, is majestic, and Suzanne Cloutier makes a beautiful Desdemona. If you want Shakespeare, go elsewhere; but if you'll settle for a good-looking movie, this is for you.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

COMMUNICATIONS

SUGAR STRIKE

New Orleans, La.

TO the Editors: Your editorial concerning the Louisiana sugar refinery strike [July 29] is so obviously based on misinformation that I thought you might like to know the true facts.

1. The hiring of replacement workers did not cause the violence at Reserve. Violence broke out two days after the strike began, and a month *before* replacements were hired. There was no provocation for, and there is no way of morally justifying violence against any persons, particularly foremen, supervisors and clerical workers who were not involved in the wage dispute, but who bore the brunt of the attacks.

2. The quotation attributed to me ["We may be faced with the problem of repopulating the entire community"] was taken out of context, although I am sure it was unintentional on *Life*'s part. The full quotation would have shown that I was expressing concern and regret over the consequences of the union's stand. The entire conversation was a description on my part of all the things we had done to try to avert a strike, to get along with the union, and to avoid any distress in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

community. This is our first strike at the refinery in thirty-four years of operation, nearly half of them under collective bargaining with unions.

3. The field workers' strike of 1953 has no connection with the refinery strike. In fact, the present union men on strike crossed the picket lines set up by the striking field workers. But even as to field wages, you might like to know that the "floors" on such wages are set by the Department of Agriculture after open hearings. We have always paid above the level set by the government.

4. No Godchaux official—certainly not I—ever uttered the "good masters" remark you picked up. This is a deliberate falsehood spread by someone anxious to provoke hatred.

5. The judge in an adjoining parish, and in an action not related to our company's strike, reportedly threatened to hold three national union officials in contempt of court because they reportedly counselled men on strike to violate a restraining order issued by the court. This is quite different from the half-truth given to you.

As you can see, the situation is somewhat different than you imagined. The facts are that refinery workers at our plant averaged $72 a week last year, which is far above the state average for industrial workers. Many live in homes supplied by the company at rentals of $8 to $12 per month including utilities. There is a swimming pool, a community club, an athletic field and picnic grounds. We were among the first to have group insurance, starting in 1927, and have an active safety program for which we received a commendation last year.

The union demanded a big wage increase during a period when the Louisiana sugar refining industry was having its worst times since 1939. That is the root cause of the strike.

LEON GODCHAUX II,
President, Godchaux Sugars, Inc.

THE CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

announces its

28TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Sheraton-Park Hotel, Washington, D.C.

November 11, 12, 13, 1955

THEME: "AFRICA AND ASIA IN THE WORLD COMMUNITY"

The C.A.I.P. is the only Catholic organization in the United States whose efforts are devoted exclusively to the promotion of international peace.

For further information about the 1955 Conference or about membership, write to:

THE CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

1312 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington 5, D.C.

"I CONFESS"

Saint Cloud, Minn.

TO the Editors: Your reprinting in "Of Note" of the *Pilot's* editorial "I Confess" [Sept. 16] prompts me to ask concerning the "guilt" of dropping the atomic bombs: Who is guilty? And of what?

Instead of being asked to repent for the sin of dropping the bomb, we ought to be asked to atone for it. Is it shocking to state that I feel no guilt for this act (and neither do those with whom I have discussed this notion)? I did not "murder in one single flash tens of thousands of innocent people." Someone did, of course. And that someone bears the responsibility, the guilt for that act. More likely, there were quite a few persons involved. We cannot place the burden on the military alone, or the scientists alone, or even on the two presidents involved. But should those who did not know what was contemplated, were not consulted, and were only told the final results after they happened, be held "guilty"?

I and many like me were too young to vote for those who had a hand in developing the atomic bomb. We only fought in the wars created by others. Perhaps our parents were guilty for electing these people, and the *Pilot* feels that we are guilty of the sins of our parents. I doubt it though.

Why not cry out for nationwide atonement rather than repentance? The actual guilt lies with a small group, probably within the circle of the Allies of the war. It is a small group and no one should proclaim that the guilt rests on us all. Instead, in a spirit of Christian Love, let us all join in atoning for the sins of we know not whom.

GEORGE CARTHAGE.

"THE ROAD TO DESEGREGATION"

Portland, Ore.

TO the Editors: I'm curious about whether or not you are aware of facts surrounding the publication of an editorial in the North-Central Louisiana *Register* of the diocese of Alexandria, and which you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reprinted in "Of Note" under the title, "The Road to Desegregation" [Aug. 5].

The Negro Catholic population of Shreveport, La., is small. The fact of the matter is that the two existing Catholic "white" high schools could easily accommodate the handful of Negro students who should be receiving a Catholic education. Is it reasonable then, to build a new high school for Negroes? In this light does the following quote from the *Register* editorial make much sense? "It is easier to integrate a new school, just a building, than to attempt to change the pattern that has existed for so long in an existing school. In time, once the break can be effected in a few schools, integration of all will become more readily accepted." Does anyone really believe that the new school will be integrated when there is certainly no shortage of "white" Catholic high school facilities? As a matter of fact it seems that this much quoted editorial raised a mild furor in Shreveport after which the dean of the diocese (presumably speaking for the Bishop) stated that the school was to be located in a predominantly Negro neighborhood and was planned to serve those in the area, but any white students who apply will be admitted; it seems unlikely, however, that any white students might apply in the near future!

Who's fooling whom? The editorial might have made sense if they were building a much needed grade school! Who wrote that editorial and just *what* did it mean? The fact that the diocese is building a high school which Negroes can attend only now that the Supreme Court has made its decision, a school which can't possibly be in operation for another year, sounds like deliberately laid plans for the perpetuation of segregation to me.

DIXIE ANN MCCLEARY.

"PLIGHT OF THE INTELLECTUAL"

Cleveland, Ohio

TO the Editors: Thomas Molnar's "Plight of the Intellectual" [Aug. 19] is a graphic illustration of the reasons so many intellectuals are in a plight.

He complains about intellectuals being isolated from the concerns and thinking of the people; but by his very attitude and language he self-isolates himself.

Mr. Molnar talks about human beings in such terms as "masses" and "mass-society." He speaks of "imposing" values upon them, not of winning them by truth and love. He says that "values are born, live and die within the class only"—which is historical nonsense. And certainly he writes in words and phrases which the people cannot be expected to understand, or indeed to bother reading.

I take it that men like Chesterton and Sam Johnson were intellectuals. Fancy the roars of laughter with which they would greet such Molnar statements as "the protective shells within which ideas can mature;" "the charismatic element in western society," and "the process of purging ideas is an intellectual enterprise, and the mind of the intellectual is the laboratory where it takes place. This laboratory must be closed, and . . . free from public curiosity."

Mr. Molnar's final sentence is a counsel of cowardice and despair; its advice to the intellectual is, "Let him stop his ears, and tied to the mast of his destiny, wait for more friendly waters."

I realize that I am being rough, and I beg forgiveness in all charity. But our intellectuals—including some who write for The Commonweal—need to be shaken up. It is the business of the man with ideas to find right and effective ways and means of getting his ideas to the public. Most of our intellectuals are failing dismally, and the root reason is simple: they don't love their fellowman as flamingly and personally as they ought.

Most of our intellectuals are not making any real effort at all to reach the people. They don't write and speak for the people, but only for one another; and sometimes, I swear, for themselves alone. What I would prescribe is an intensive course of reading in men like Belloc and Chesterton, in the hope that some of their real concern for God's fellow-images, and their willingness to write in a way that anybody could easily grasp, might rub off on our protectively-shelled and closed-laboratory intellectuals. And an occasional visit to the pub wouldn't hurt, either.

JOSEPH A. BREIG.

"PERON AND THE CHURCH"

Buenos Aires, Argentina

TO the Editors: For more than five years you have been sending The Commonweal to a group of young Catholic laymen in Argentina. Their magazine, *Edición* — later metamorphosed into *Relación* — was sent to you as long as circumstances permitted its publication. Through this generous exchange you allowed us to keep in touch with world problems and to evaluate them from the viewpoint of Christian humanism. Another service—of a, for us, more vital nature—was rendered by your magazine: the article on "Perón and the Church," by Francis McMahon, was translated, mimeographed and widely distributed among Argentine Catholics, when their outer struggle and the inner crisis of their civic attitudes reached a painful climax. For all this we extend our most sincere thanks to the editors of The Commonweal. . . . The nightmare over, the hour is arrived of working for the future of Christian Democracy in Argentina. The Commonweal will play, we believe, an important role in this process.

W. HARRINGTON,
p. Librería Noel.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Despair and Hope of Modern Man

THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS. By Albert Camus. Knopf. $3.50.

By MICHAEL HARRINGTON

AT the beginning of *The Myth of Sisyphus,* Albert Camus describes the modern tradition, and in doing so he defines and places himself: "Never, perhaps, have minds been so different. And yet we recognize as identical the spiritual landscapes in which they get underway. Likewise, despite such dissimilar zones of knowledge, the cry that terminates their itinerary rings out in the same way. It is evident that the thinkers we have just recalled have a common climate. To say that that climate is deadly scarcely amounts to playing on words. Living under that stifling sky forces one to get away or to stay. The important thing is to find out how people get away in the first case and why people stay in the second case. This is how I define the problem of suicide . . ."

The problem of suicide. The very choice of a basic phrase is perhaps more revealing than Camus' description of it: for it amounts to the inversion of ontology. Before the emergence of the modern world, almost all thought began with being and with the conviction that being was somehow rational. But now the beginning, the *donneé* of the failed October Revolution and of Nazism and World War II, is non-being, the instinctive faith in irrationality. Prophets of this despair are Kierkegaard, Dostoevski, Kafka, Hitler, Stalin, Franco.

The Myth of Sisyphus is Camus' expression of this mood in its purest form. Here, as in the rest of his early work, hopelessness is the immediate data of consciousness: I exist, therefore I despair. The problem, given this basic insight, is how to continue existence, whether to get away or to stay, to commit suicide or to go on living. In his later books, particularly in *The Plague* and *The Rebel,* Camus goes beyond himself and sees man as more than the mythic Sisyphus toiling up the hill pushing a rock, over and over and over again. Yet this essay, and Camus' other writing from the same period, is extremely important for an understanding of the man and of why he has changed his attitude, of the age and of how *it* might change.

In Camus' *Caligula,* that Roman tyrant is seen as an existentialist hero who, in his despair over the arbitrariness and meaninglessness of the world, makes himself arbitrary and meaningless. At the moment of his assassination he is happy, because his murderers have proved that men will not passively accept the absurd, that they will revolt. In *The Misunderstood,* God is presented as a speechless butler who moves through the play silently while a mother and her daughter murder their son and brother because of a misunderstanding. At the very end of the play, mother and son are dead and the daughter cries out for help. The butler appears, speaking for the first time. The daughter asks: "Will you help me?" The play ends as the butler replies: "No."

Perhaps even more grim and frightening was the image which Camus conjured in *The Stranger.* There, a Baudelarian ennui is raised to an infinite power until the only thing that is interesting to the hero is his own death, particularly if it is accomplished in a degrading way. In these books, and in *The Myth of Sisyphus,* Camus created a brilliant image of modern horror and hopelessness. He also proposed a reason why man should *not* commit suicide.

That reason—the one element of hope, if one can call resignation by such a name—developed out of the very intuition of despair. In Sartre's *Nausea* the hero becomes sick with being, with the very existence of a gnarled root. And yet it is this very consciousness of being (of its "inner tenacity," to use Maritain's magnificent phrase) which provides the basis for the continuation of existence. In Camus' myth, Sisyphus, by accepting his lot, finds that "each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy."

In Milton's *Paradise Lost,* the poet had set out to justify the ways of God to man, but in doing this he fell in love with Satan. In Camus, the philosopher starts to prove that death is all, but in doing so he falls in love with life. In both cases, the contradiction of logic by emotion is something of a flaw. Camus particularly, comes perilously close to a romantic, Shelley-like resolution of his despair, of Sisyphus as Prometheus, and the consequence is a book that is fascinating yet somehow incomplete. In a later book he himself identified the source of this problem. Writing in *The Rebel,* he pointed out that the only logical

JUBILEE presents—

THOMAS MERTON'S 'TOWER OF BABEL'

First publication of a sixteen-page verse play—a brilliant and unusual work which may become a modern classic.

You can get JUBILEE's current issue, which contains the entire text of the play FREE with a year's subscription entered now.

In the same issue: a feature on the first Mass in English—Bishop Sheen's singing of the Byzantine Liturgy; an article on an Italian Abbé Pierre; a new look at Saint Thérèse; and many other interesting features.

To get this issue—FREE—with your subscription to JUBILEE ($4 per year) fill out the coupon below.

To the Editors of **JUBILEE**
377 Fourth Avenue, N.Y. **16**

☐ Please send me FREE your October issue with Thomas Merton's 'Tower of Babel' and enter me as a subscriber to JUBILEE (rate: $4 per year.) ☐ Payment enclosed. ☐ Bill me.

Name .....

Street .....

City .....Zone ...State .....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Christmas Begins With Christian Cards

Folded Size: 4⅛" x 5¼"

Yes, the kind of cards made by the Benedictine monks: artistic, simple, beautiful. On quality paper, yet at prices most persons can afford. Comments by others: "I've been looking for such cards for a long time" . . . "So expressive of true meaning of Christmas" . . . "Artistically tasteful" . . . "devout but not 'gooey'" . . . "A delight to order them!"

NAMES IMPRINTED, MODERATE COST

FREE 32-page catalog pictures each card. Also gift items

CONCEPTION ABBEY PRESS
Box 707, CONCEPTION, MO.
Or ask your local dealer

Classified

★RATES, payable in advance: 16⅔c a word (6 words, $1). Centered lines $1 each. 12 words or 2 lines minimum. Discounts: 5% for 3 times, 10% for 7 times, 15% for 13 times.

IRISH BOOKS AND GIFTS

★ Books, Linens, Gifts, *Catalogs.* IRISH INDUSTRIES DEPOT INC. 870 Lexington Ave., (near 65th), New York

CHESTERTON AND BELLOC

★Scarce Chesterton and Belloc Books 250 Titles. Free Catalogue. Prosser, 3118 N. Keating, Chicago 41, Ill.

BOOKS

★Order any book in print from ROBBINS BOOK CO. No postage charges, prompt service. 1704 Race St., Philadelphia 3, Pa.

★HILARY HOUSE—prompt mail order service on any book of Catholic interest. Free circular. Box 6, Putnam, Conn.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

★CHRISTMAS CARDS! Wide selection of NEW contemporary, Byzantine and Baroque designs by Robert Cary. Special discounts. Free circular. SERRANA, Box 411, Santa Barbara, Calif.

conclusion of the belief that the world is absurd is silence, so long as that silence itself has no meaning. The very act of arguing lucidly about suicide is, in a sense, like putting the ending of an O. Henry short story at the beginning.

This is certainly not to say that *The Myth of Sisyphus* is a bad book. It is strewn with insights, relentless and Cartesian in its intellectual probing, a work of value both in and of itself and in terms of Camus' later devolpment. It most certainly should be read by anyone interested in modern literature or philosophy and it is, at least, better than a good ninety per cent of the books that are published in any given year. What this does mean is that this book is all the more interesting for the fact that Camus has gone beyond it. The muted affirmations of *The Plague* and *The Rebel* can only be understood if placed in the context of this book's cried-out despair.

To understand our times, it is essential to know the inversion of ontology, the substitution of nonbeing for being, irrationality for rationality, despair for hope. But it is even more important to realize that this substitution is, in a very real sense, dialectical; that the nonbeing becomes being, the irrationality rational—the despair becomes hope. This is the core of *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Camus has transcended this intuition, yet it clings to his thought—as indeed it clings to the thought of the twentieth century.

A Classic Theme

THE MALEDICTION. By Jean Giono. Criterion. $3.

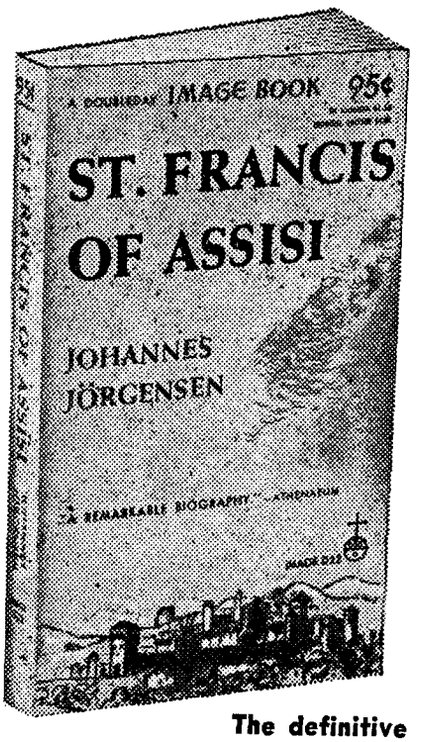
By JAMES GREENE

THE novel seems to be the liveliest of modern literary forms. Within its generous confines all manner of experiment goes forward: particles of man are isolated, examined and preserved. To be sure, many of the experiments fail. Some, however, are excitingly successful.

Jean Giono's novel *The Maledic-*

DOUBLEDAY
IMAGE BOOKS
"...making the world's finest Catholic literature available to all..."

Featured this month . . .



The definitive Jorgensen biography

This lively, readable life history tells the inspiring and intensely fascinating story of one of the most beloved saints of all times. With reverence and understanding, the author examines every phase of the life and work of St. Francis, whose marvelous appeal is timeless and to all men. The original edition was $4.00. Image edition 95¢.

Get this low-priced, deluxe pocket-size Image book today and see all 26 outstanding titles wherever books are sold.

Buy Image Books
Read Image Books
Give Image Books

DOUBLEDAY IMAGE BOOKS
575 Madison Ave., N. Y. 22

THE GUILD BOOK SHOP
117 E. 57th St., N.Y. 22—PLaza 3-0225

Crucifixes and Statues by modern artists
Exceptional stock of Catholic Books
Cards for all occasions. Catalog on request.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion is an ambitious, eminently successful experiment. It is concerned with the "fate" of a single family, the Costes. The founder of the family fortune returns from Mexico with the understanding that a curse is upon him and his heirs. And, like members of the House of Atreus, the Costes are compelled to cooperate with that curse. "Fate," the narrator observes, "is but the intelligence of things which bow to the secret desires of him who appears to submit but who in reality provokes, calls forth and seduces."

One by one the members of the Coste family are struck down by the simplest things in creation—a wound from a fishing hook, a cherry stone caught in the throat. Still the malediction, because of its high seriousness and poetic transport, forbids all ordinary mourning. The provincial aristocracy who make up the Costes' world watch the effects of the curse with the detached interest of children inspecting a flower; it is not the isolated deaths that fill them with fear, but the emerging pattern of deaths. It is not until Monsieur Joseph, a stranger to the province, arrives and marries the last, semi-mad Coste and assumes his wife's family name that the instinct for self-preservation becomes a match for the "intelligence of things."

Giono's style is as suited to his theme as were the rhythms of Sophocles to events in Thebes. A remarkable translation by Peter De Mendelssohn makes the uniqueness of Giono's talents available to American readers. The novel is a short one, and this, too, serves to underline Giono's classic theme. Like a Greek temple, it contains within its tranquil simplicity the remembered violence of the gods.

The story is told by a family friend and counsellor. He is a chorus, but not the involved Chorus of the Sophoclean plays. He is interested in the dark things that take place in the book, but too frightened by events to cast his lot completely with the Costes.

This novel is similar in many ways to C. F. Ramuz' *When The Mountain Fell.* It was Coleridge, I believe, who said that in the world there are more things invisible than visible. Both Ramuz and Giono plunge deep into the unseen part of creation. Both deliver us back to the shores of light shaken, but wiser. It is difficult to recommend *The Malediction* strongly enough. Few books can match it as a dramatic experiment by one of our major creative talents. Still fewer can match its classic purity.

In Africa

RETURN TO LAUGHTER. By Elenore Smith Bowen. Harper. $3.50.

By R. A. HOLZHAUER

IT is curious that this particular book, which has been consistently praised, was published by the author under a nom de plume. There is nothing in this fictionized version of a woman anthropologist settling in for two years with a West African tribe which should be of embarrassment professionally or

FUNDAMENTALS OF CATHOLIC DOGMA

by LUDWIG OTT, S.T.D.

This is a conspectus of all dogmatic theology; the author planned it as a textbook for the use of seminarians, but the simplicity of its presentation and its conciseness will serve the needs of laymen and of priests who desire hurried consultation.

For full understanding of the teaching of the Church the author gives the historical background of the development of the various dogmas, the most important of the scriptural and patristic texts and the main pronouncements of the Holy See. He also includes references to the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas as guideposts to more profound study. But the chief aim of the book is identical with that of the *Summa* of Aquinas—to instruct beginners in the essentials of Christian dogma. The translation was made by Dr. Patrick Lynch, and this first English edition is edited by James Canon Bastible. 535 pp., $7.50

At all Catholic Bookstores

B. HERDER BOOK CO., *Publishers*

15 & 17 South Broadway St. Louis 2, Mo.

HUNDREDS OF KITS ARE NEEDED . . .

by the missionaries, to relieve the sufferings of their people. One of these Kits, carefully designed for the most effective use, can be sent for a gift of $30. Many of the readers of The Commonweal have already accepted this opportunity. Will you not generously join that number? Send your gift to Rev. Edward F. Garesche, S.J., President, Catholic Medical Mission Board, Inc., 10 West 17th Street, New York 11, N.Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

monroe FOLDING BANQUET TABLES

If you are on the Kitchen Committee of some Church, Club, School, etc., in your town you will be interested in this modern Folding Banquet Table. Write for Catalog and special discounts to institutions and organizations.

MONROE CO. 111 Church St. COLFAX, IOWA

IS YOUR "GOLDEN RULE" IN HOUSING MINUS A FEW INCHES?

Live your beliefs in unsegregated housing in beautiful Bucks County. A spacious 3 bedroom ranch home, radiant heated, large finished garage on a fully landscaped ¼ acre lot $11,900 and up. Also 4 bedroom houses $13,600. 100% mortgages available. On bus line to El, near Phila. Interchange, Pa. Turnpike Call ELmwood 7-4356 or write

CONCORD PARK HOMES, OLD LINCOLN HIGHWAY & STREET ROAD, TREVOSE, PA.

STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233) SHOWING THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION of THE COMMONWEAL, published weekly at Orange, Conn., for October 7, 1955.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher. THE COMMONWEAL Publishing Co., Inc., 386 4th Ave., New York 16, N. Y. Editor, Edward S. Skillin, 386 4th Ave., New York 16, N. Y. Managing Editor, James O'Gara, 386 4th Ave., New York 16, N. Y. Business manager, Edward S. Skillin, 386 4th Ave., New York 16, N. Y.

2. The owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership, or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual member, must be given.) THE COMMONWEAL Publishing Co., 386 4th Ave., New York 16, N. Y.; Philip Burnham, 3326 Washington St., San Francisco 18, Calif.; David Burnham, New Milford, Conn.; Kathleen Casey Craig, Sewickley, Pa.; Helen C. Ormond, 4 Gramercy Park, New York 3, N. Y.; J. Sanford Shanley, 140 Cedar St., New York 4, N. Y.; William Pfaff, 5 Tudor City Pl., New York 17, N. Y.; Edward S. Skillin, 386 4th Ave., New York 16, N. Y.; Otto L. Spaeth, 32 East 69th St., New York 21, N. Y.

3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding, 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.) None.

4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner.

5. The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the 12 months preceding the date shown above was: 20,632. (This information is required from daily, weekly, semi-weekly, and tri-weekly newspapers only.)

EDWARD S. SKILLIN, Bus. Mgr.
Sworn to and subscribed before me this 29th day of September, 1955.
Vincent J. Moses, Notary Public
(My commission expires March 30, 1956.)

personally. The visit was a unique experience in which the young woman remained alone with this tribe for twenty-six months, with only rare trips to the government station for supplies and a chat with the English administrator.

The author appears as narrator and observer, but she is a specialist of whom we learn nothing, with whom we do not become engaged or intrigued. She evokes little interest or suspense. The drama depends upon the natives, and their closely observed lives. There is intriguing but prudent description of most of the tribal life, including dances, marital habits, birth and death rites, witchcraft and the intricacies of social customs and language. After pages of unremitting observations which reveal both the simplicity (the happy savage) and the complexity (taboos, fears and social customs) Miss Bowen introduces more of her own reflections concerning an epidemic among native friends.

Miss Bowen informs us that after her experiences she has undergone a change within herself. Her professional zeal has not abated but it is tempered with that happy fusion of knowledge and experience which allows the newly created Ph. D. to function as a knowledgeable human. The textbooks have been assimilated.

The book has charm, especially as one is caught up in sympathy with the life, and so often the death, of the natives Miss Bowen was fortunate to know well. However, there is lacking the deft, special insight which characterizes literary facility. You can find a contrast in André Gide's *Travels in the Congo*, a non-fictional account of his African journey. He touched upon all the material Miss Bowen so faithfully explicates and presents as fiction.

REVIEWERS

Michael Harrington writes frequently for The Commonweal on political and cultural affairs.

James Greene is a free lance writer who lives in New York.

R. A. Holzhauer is a contributor to a number of Catholic publications.

A magnificent life of Saint Thomas à Becket by an always superb writer

MY LIFE FOR MY SHEEP

by Alfred Duggan
Author of *The Little Emperors*

An acknowledged authority on the Middle Ages, Alfred Duggan has written a masterly biography of the martyr-archbishop of Canterbury who was a wordly Chancellor of England before undergoing the spiritual conversion that led him to give up his life in defense of the Church. In Mr. Duggan's finest book, a great saint is seen in all the facets of his extraordinary personality. $5.00

At all bookstores

COWARD-McCANN, Inc.
210 Madison Ave., N.Y. 16

Educational

MARYLAND

College of Notre Dame of Maryland

North Charles St., Baltimore 10, Maryland. A fully accredited Catholic College for Women, conducted by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Courses leading to B.A. degree, with concentration in Art, Languages, Literature, Sciences, Music, Social Studies, Speech, Mathematics, Philosophy and Theology. Workshops in Creative Writing. Education courses leading to teacher certification. Pre-medical and laboratory technical training. Full Physical Education program, including Swimming. Address the Registrar.

RHODE ISLAND

Portsmouth Priory School

Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 23 miles from Providence, 8 miles from Newport, on island waters of Narragansett Bay. Conducted by American Monks of the English Benedictine Congregation, assisted by Lay Masters. Five forms, 8th grade and four years of high school. Standard Preparatory Course for all colleges and technical schools. Added opportunities in Mathematics and Languages. College Board Examination. Full facilities for athletics including sailing. Address the Secretary.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Milestone

At the beginning of this magazine's thirty-second year of publication, subscribers to The Commonweal have a great deal to look forward to. For one thing, the fifty-two numbers of the next twelve months will include a number of special education and literary issues. In all, regular subscribers can anticipate more than thirteen hundred pages of good reading on topics of current and lasting interest.

Questions similar to Religion and Patriotism will be thoroughly explored in editorials, articles and letters to the Editors. Key ideas and happenings the world over will be examined by a wide variety of eminent and articulate contributors. Subscribers will also be aided to keep in touch week by week with the much discussed plays, movies and books of the day.

There are many advantages in these eventful days in receiving The Commonweal regularly. A two-dollar trial subscription, which will bring you the magazine for the next fifteen weeks, will demonstrate this to your own satisfaction. We suggest that you send in the attached coupon (or a facsimile) filled in with your name and address—today.

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER
FOR NEW SUBSCRIBERS ONLY

THE COMMONWEAL, 386 Fourth Ave., New York 16, N. Y.

Enclosed is $2. Please send The Commonweal for fifteen weeks to:

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____

10-14-55

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED